

PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 28, 2005**2005-0026 – Study Issue Precise Plan for El Camino Real Update (Also to City Council on December 13, 2005)**

Andy Miner, Principal Planner, presented the staff report. He said the original Precise Plan for El Camino Real was adopted in 1993. The Study Issue rankings for 2005 from the City Council and Planning Commission, ranked the need to update this Precise Plan as the number two issue for Community Development. Mr. Miner said the staff report is very thorough and Attachment E of the report is the proposed framework of what the Precise Plan would look like. The framework includes detailed opportunity areas, node suggestions, specific design guidelines, a list of possible allowed uses, and incentives of what could be included in some of the opportunity areas and in the nodes that would encourage people to want to redevelop property. This report has a larger scope than the 1993 report. Some of the concepts of the Grand Boulevard design that are used in the San Mateo County area are included in this report. Another suggested area of improvement is to provide more clear guidelines for big box building design, design of strip centers, for the streetscape, and design criteria for properties that are adjacent for existing residential uses. Other areas being looked at are ways to encourage alternative transportation and additional incentives to make redevelopment easier. Staff recommends the Commission adopt Alternative 1, approve the framework which includes the vision statement, the goals, policies and implementation actions and to further develop features of the revised plan and rezone all properties on El Camino Real (ECR) to the ECR Combining District.

Comm. Babcock referred to Attachment E pages 4 and 5. She asked for clarification regarding the two acre minimum lot size under the Development Criteria section. **Trudi Ryan**, Planning Officer, said it was intended that large properties cannot be subdivided to less than the minimum of two acres. Properties smaller than two acres can be redeveloped without being subject to the two acre minimum. Comm. Babcock said the Plan seems to encourage small businesses, but also encourage the merger of small properties to create larger properties for major businesses. Mr. Miner said part of the idea of opportunity areas is that sometimes the small lots are prohibitive for nice redevelopment, but if several small lots were combined it could be a nice redeveloped property. Part of the plan would be to fine-tune the opportunity areas. Comm. Babcock asked for an example of what a “high volume retail use on a small property” would be. Mr. Miner said an example would be retail use in a node area, where there may be excess parking, other access to the site, or lots of small lots with little projects.

Comm. Susler referred to Attachment E page 3 and asked why staff is discouraging Places of Assembly along ECR. Mr. Miner explained that the

concern of allowing Places of Assembly along ECR is it could affect the retail feel of the street and the usability of area. Comm. Sulser asked what about Places of Assembly that have a commercial component to them. Ms. Ryan said there is a pending study regarding Places of Assembly that will resolve some of the related questions for large Places of Assembly, e.g. Community Centers, religious institutions, Lodge Halls. Staff feels that ECR is not the most appropriate place for these types of uses. Comm. Sulser asked why the three node locations listed in the report were selected. Mr. Miner said the areas listed are only suggestions, but that each of the three nodes is a major intersection.

Comm. Simons commented about other types of uses that might be discouraged along ECR. He said he has seen in other Cities certain businesses added to streets that may provide a service, but the type of business has taken away from the look and feel of the community. Ms. Ryan said one way to address this issue would be through design guidelines or criteria. Comm. Simons and staff discussed the issue and determined that it would be desirable to discourage ground floor offices and encourage ground floor uses with a pedestrian emphasis.

Comm. Moylan commented that when the Precise Plan for ECR was discussed at Study Session that there were issues brought up that are not reflected in the report. Ms. Ryan said staff tried to reflect the issues brought up, but requests the Commissioners send their concerns to staff if they feel an item of concern was not captured. Comm. Moylan said some of the items he would like to see addressed in the final version of this report are:

1. Take any opportunity the City can to reduce the amount of pavement along ECR and to have more permeable surface.
2. ECR is not appropriate for any further high-density housing because it is not a rail transit corridor.
3. Determine a unified element that would provide consistent street numbering along ECR.
4. ECR needs better gateways.
5. Include 6-foot wide sidewalks along ECR.

Mr. Miner said that many of these types of items would be part of the streetscape guidelines, but that these will be included in the report. Ms. Ryan commented that the Commission had differing opinions on the high-density housing so there was no recommendation regarding whether it should or should not be encouraged.

Chair Hungerford asked about landscaping. Mr. Miner said landscaping would be a part of the design guidelines. Ms. Ryan added that there are two different policies included in the report that address landscaping and emphasize the existing zoning requirements for landscaping.

Chair Hungerford opened the public hearing.

There was no public comment.

Chair Hungerford closed the public hearing.

Comm. Simons moved for Alternative 1, to approve the Framework for the Update of the Precise Plan for ECR (Attachment E) which includes a vision statement, goals, policies and implementation actions, and further develop the features of the revised plan for subsequent adoption by City Council with minor changes. Comm. Simons also included in the motion to add the following language: reduce the amount of pavement along ECR with permeable surfaces where possible; to add consistent signage for address numbering; to clearly define the two gateways at the City entry points on ECR; to reference the Valley Transportation Agency pedestrian guidelines; to add ECR 2.h. (Attachment E, page 3) to encourage offices to be on the second floor, and ECR 2.i., to encourage pedestrian access and feel for first floor businesses along ECR; to clarify ECR DC 1 (Attachment E, page 5) to make sure it refers to large properties being subdivided being limited to a minimum of 2 acre lots; to add that landscaping elements along the street be large species native trees as appropriate. Vice Chair Fussell seconded.

Comm. Sulser offered a Friendly Amendment proposing another node at Fair Oaks due to the large amount of high-density housing along the Fair Oaks corridor and the Community Center. Mr. Miner said this was possible, but staff did not suggest this area as a node initially because the areas between Sunnyvale and Wolfe were not included as opportunity areas. The Friendly Amendment was acceptable to the maker and the seconder of the motion.

Comm. Simons said there are elements of the Grand Boulevard design that he likes. He said he would like to see some consistency along ECR up the peninsula. He said that some of the biggest mistakes with landscaping are with poorly maintained private landscaping.

Vice Chair Fussell thanked staff for the hard work put into this report. He said ECR is an area that is visited by a lot of people and provides an opportunity to set a good impression with visitors and to make the residents proud of their community. He said he would like to see the plans move forward.

Final Action:

Comm. Simons made a motion on 2005-0026 to approve the Framework for the Update of the Precise Plan for El Camino Real (ECR) (Attachment E) which includes a vision statement, goals, policies and implementation actions, and further develop the features of the revised plan for subsequent adoption by City Council with minor changes, including the addition of the following language: reduce the amount of pavement along ECR with permeable surfaces where possible; to add consistent signage for address numbering; to clearly define the two gateways at the City entry points on ECR; to reference the Valley Transportation Agency pedestrian guidelines; to add ECR 2.h. (Attachment E, page 3) to encourage offices to be on the second floor, and ECR 2.i., to encourage pedestrian access and feel for first floor businesses along ECR; to clarify ECR DC 1 (Attachment E, page 5) to make sure it refers to large properties being subdivided being limited to a minimum of 2 acre lots; to add that landscaping elements along the street be large species native trees as appropriate; and to propose an additional node at Fair Oaks due to the large amount of high-density housing along the Fair Oaks corridor and the Community Center. Vice Chair Fussell seconded.

Motion carried unanimously, 7-0.

This item is scheduled to be heard by the City Council on December 13, 2005.